

misdemeanor. In 1978 the Legislature made a mistake, I believe, and they reduced possession of less than one ounce of marijuana to an infraction which is \$100 fine slap on the wrist. Now with that reduction, I think we left a misleading message with our young people. To give you a little history, through the sixties you remember the flower children and the basic philosophy, do it if it feels good and do your own thing, and continued through the permissive seventies of, gee, a little drug use doesn't hurt anything, and today I think through the eighties we are reaping the harvest of those young people who have graduated, if you will, to harder drugs, the crack and cocaine that have become an increasing problem in the eighties and also still the marijuana. Law enforcement, when they testified on this bill say that where they find crack and cocaine, they find large amounts of marijuana. The distributors tend to distribute both. Our society wonders why youth can't learn, workers can't produce, critical thinking skills have deteriorated and senseless accidents occur. And I think sometimes we are finding now more and more through probes that these are alcohol or marijuana related. Time and time again also, young people have raised the question with those who work with drug programs in the schools, why is a minor in possession of alcohol a three to \$500 fine and a misdemeanor and marijuana is \$100, an infraction? They ask, why is the penalty of possession of a 12 ounce can of beer in your hand more than 12 ounces of marijuana in your pocket? That's hard to answer and counsellors and school people and law enforcement have no reply. It's widely accepted and acknowledged that alcohol and marijuana are the gateway drugs for our young people. I was asked why I didn't include alcohol in the 1000-foot drug-free school zone and I had to accept the fact that alcohol is legal, it's a legal drug for those over 21 while marijuana and other drugs are not. Marijuana is illegal for all ages and should be and I think it is time to correct that mistake the Legislature did in 1978 and send the message not only to our children, but to adults also that marijuana is a dangerous drug and should be given at least a low misdemeanor status, it is a crime. One of the absurdity of keeping marijuana an infraction is that if I'm smoking marijuana and holding it, it's an infraction, \$100. If I pass it to my buddy it's a felony because that is delivering a controlled substance. That's too much difference in between those kinds of penalties. I do want to point out also that Senator Chambers who was one of the few that were in the body in 1978 did vote against reducing marijuana as an infraction, and I think we did send the wrong message. So with that, I would hope you would adopt this